

Dear All

Thank you for all your prayers and Emails and we are sorry we have not managed to reply to you all individually.

We have been here in Lubumbashi three weeks now and are starting to feel at home. As you can see from the photo's we had a very warm welcome from Bishop Isingoma and his team, some of whom we will be introducing to you over the coming months.

We are starting to make some progress in learning Swahili now and can actually get the gist of what people are saying to us sometimes. Thankfully pronunciation is straight forward. French is used much more than we had been led to believe - we were learning Swahili numbers the other day when Joseph (our language teacher) told us they use French numbers when counting money and if we used Swahili nobody would understand us! Eric is relieved he has 'O' level French and Sandra is annoyed she has to learn two languages!

On our first Sunday we had a welcoming service with an excellent youth choir at the Diocesan centre followed by lunch with Bishop Isingoma and his family. After the adults have taken communion the children all line up for a blessing. The line quickly grew down the aisle blocking it. As visitors (just for one Sunday) we were sitting at the front, so Peter and Atiyyah found they could not get to the end of the queue. We were slightly alarmed to see Peter lie down on a pew near the front (Congolese children are very well behaved), however, ever resourceful he proceeded to slide through the back of the pew and continued on through the pews closely followed by Atiyyah until they got to the back of the queue - to our relief and everybody's amusement.

We have had our delights and frustrations over the last three weeks - our electricity is very off and on, which is frustrating - worse than just not having it at all; everything takes a long time, so we can end up feeling we have not achieved much. On the up side, we have been enjoying the hospitality of some of the church staff, with some excellent food and we are forming some good friendships with them. The food in general is much better than we had been expecting, with some particularly delicious vegetable dishes.

Peter and Atiyyah have settled into and are enjoying their new school, in fact they have taken to life here very well and adapted very quickly.

Please give thanks for; our smooth journey, the warm welcome and friendship we've received, they have found a bigger house for us (the present one is very small) and for Peter & Atiyyah settling in very well.

Please pray for: Continued progress and perseverance in our learning Swahili.

For Congo for peaceful elections and positive participation and outcomes (they take place in April and May).

For wisdom for us all as we discuss the development and health programmes and our roles in them.

Love

Eric, Sandra, Peter & Atiyyah

